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## IMAGINATION.

### SERVANT OR MASTER.

REASON'S eye is calm and steady,  
Gazing ever straight ahead,  
Seeing clearly every object  
In its level vision spread.  
But Imagination cries: "Look upward!  
Here are wondrous things to see!  
Leave your sober, steady plodding,  
Trust my wings and fly with me."  
Reason answers: "I will follow  
Throughout all your fairy land,  
But forget not, pretty maiden,  
I shall always hold your hand."  
Then the sprite Imagination  
Guides him to the Ivory Door,  
Lets him see the deeper meaning  
Of his slowly gathered lore.  
Never master had a servant  
Who could give him such delight,  
But 'tis well that Reason watch her,  
See her safely home at night.

The scholar struggles slowly  
Through the records of the past,  
Sifting, balancing, rejecting,

Pondering o'er their meaning vast.  
Suddenly Imagination  
Breaks from Reason's curbing rein  
As the lightning leaps from heaven,  
Flashing through the startled brain  
Swiftly vivid pictures, blending  
In *one truth* the scattered train  
Of the facts which toil unending  
Strove to reconcile in vain.

He who walks beside the river  
Hears its vexed and sullen roar,  
Sees it sweeping swiftly onward,  
Sees—a fact—and nothing more.  
He who views it from the mountain  
Sees a gleaming silver rod,  
Silent, motionless, completed,  
Like the changeless truth of God.

There's a pathway up the mountain,  
Steep, laborious, and slow,  
Lighted only by the witch-fire  
Of Imagination's glow.  
That lone path which thought has traveled  
Since the Reason's earliest youth,  
Struggling upward toward the cloud-cap  
That still veils the Greater Truth.  
Not for fame and not for riches  
The explorer scales these heights,  
But for the exhilaration  
Of revealing hidden lights.  
There's no joy for human nature  
Like the mind's exultant thrill  
When the new-born thought leaps living,  
Bringing that ecstatic chill

Which has in it more than nature,  
Holds the heart and brain in thrall,  
Makes us wonder, spite of reason  
If we're not immortals all.

When Galileo saw the lamp  
Swing slowly to and fro,  
A light leaped up within him,  
'Twas Imagination's glow.  
His reason fed and fanned it  
Till its radiance burned away  
A dozen dogmas of that church  
In which he came to pray.  
When Newton saw the apple fall  
Imagination gleamed.  
With all his hoarded learning  
He never yet had dreamed  
Of what that searchlight showed him  
Which his reason gripped and steered  
Through vast sidereal spaces  
Where worlds on worlds are veered.

When the thinker meets the barrier  
Of the "Ultimate First Cause,"  
Reason fails him, for the problem  
Seems transcending Reason's laws.  
Then Imagination murmurs,  
"Set me free and I will tell  
All that Reason cannot show you,  
All the truths of heaven and hell."  
When the seeker, worn and weary,  
Meets no answer to his quest,  
Finds his Reason baffled, beaten,  
Helpless at his great behest,  
Yearns to know—what mortal knows not—

That which follows after death,  
Then Imagination whispers,  
“Lean on me, for I am Faith.”

But if once Imagination  
Is set free from Reason’s hand  
She assumes a thousand figures,  
For they’re all at her command.  
Now an angel in the brothel,  
Now a devil at the shrine,  
She endows each human error  
With an origin divine.  
She has led Utopian dreamers  
Into many a grave mistake,  
And inspired the grim fanatic  
To burn Reason at the stake.  
Like the “Genius of the Bottle”  
In the oriental tale,  
She’s a servant true and mighty  
Till the magic word shall fail,  
Then she becomes the Master,—  
Oft a tyrant and a curse,  
Leading blinded Reason captive,  
Speeding on from bad to worse,  
Till at last the frenzied dreamer  
Thinks he hears the voice of God  
In his wild Imagination,  
Uncontrolled by Reason’s rod.

All the palsyng superstitions  
That in ignorant minds find place,  
All the cruel, false “religions”  
That have cursed the human race,—  
All the torments and the furies  
That have harried every land—

Are Imagination's children  
*When released from Reason's Hand.*

Yet the greatest truths discovered  
Own Imagination's sway,  
She the seeress, she the waker,  
Lights the torch for Reason's way.  
All of poetry and music,—  
All the beauty and the grace  
Of the arts that help to sweeten  
And uplift the human race—  
Are Imagination's children,  
*Owning Reason as their Sire,*  
Sane and splendid, looking upward  
With the soul's divine desire,  
Yet they are the true half-brothers  
Of that deadly bastard spawn  
Which has kept the shadow lingering  
O'er the promise of the dawn.

C. L. MARSH.